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President: Mr. Hachani (Vice-President) ..... (Tunisia)

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In the absence of Mr. Akram (Pakistan), Mr. Hachani (Tunisia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Towards achieving internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration (E/2005/56)

Panel discussion on achieving the internationally agreed development goals: improving the way the United Nations works

1. **The President** said that the panel discussion on the theme "Achieving the internationally agreed development goals: improving the way the United Nations works" would provide an opportunity for the Council to assess the progress made and discuss with the system ways and means to improve coordination by enhancing policy coherence and cooperation among the organizations.

2. **Mr. Civili** (Assistant Secretary-General, Department of Economic and Social Affairs), Moderator, introduced the publication prepared by the Chief Executives Board, entitled "One United Nations — Catalyst for Progress and Change", noting that it should provide a good basis for a comprehensive discussion on the state of coordination within the United Nations system. Stressing the importance of the term "coordination" as defined in the Charter of the United Nations, he said that the system had learned from experience that participation and inclusiveness were the most effective means of achieving that goal. The Millennium Summit had elaborated on the fundamental values rooted in the Charter.

3. Member States now faced what the Secretary-General called the implementation challenge, which was made more complex by the changing international environment. The report focused on the challenges before the United Nations system and addressed such questions as how far coordination had advanced towards making the United Nations system a more effective agent and catalyst for change.

4. There was now a renewed drive towards accountability. The Millennium Declaration had served to advance coordination and to give the system a clear set of objectives and goals and provided essential common benchmarks against which the accountability of the system as a whole could be assessed. The publication was not a comprehensive account of all the activities of all the organizations of the system. Rather, it focused on the added value of coordination. The system was not monolithic and was well aware of the advantages of decentralization and of ensuring that diversity continued to be a source of strength.

5. The concept of One United Nations was not monolithic either; it included the idea that the system could not be the solution to all the world's problems, but that it should be focused on key global challenges. It was also a genuinely open system that sought to maximize complementarity inter alia with other regional, multilateral and bilateral entities and to involve local authorities and civil society in policy development and implementation.

6. Knowledge-sharing and a better collective management of the vast knowledge possessed by the system constituted a central feature: the system as a whole must become a centre of excellence for harnessing knowledge to deliver progress and ensuring that all the system's resources were used to provide support to Member States. The One United Nations concept involved a strong, common drive to let the system and its results speak for themselves and encapsulated a common effort to achieve the highest standards of conduct and transparency.

7. **Mr. Doryan** (World Bank) said that in the past five years, the United Nations system had made progress in four areas — focus, density, the global and country levels. The system's agencies, which had lacked focus five years ago, now had a common vision as a result of the conferences and summits of the 1990s and 2000, the outcomes of which had been integrated into their work programmes.

8. Concerning density, he noted that whereas in 2000, the relationship among members of the United Nations family had been shallow and basically supply-driven, that had currently given way to a demand-driven trend, with the demand coming from the countries themselves. The accelerated pace of globalization had wrought dramatic changes. Addressing the resulting challenges often called for collective action at the global level; in 2005, the system had learned to work together globally and now no single agency completely owned any agenda item. The Chief Executives Board, for example, was a multilateral venue for sharing global challenges and concerns. In future, the United Nations system must

have the ability to deliver a changed environment where policies could be amended through advocacy. It also needed to increase its linkages with national programmes.

9. Concerning the country level, he observed that in 2000, countries had not always been at the centre of activities and coordination among United Nations agencies had been weak. In 2005, there was much broader coordination among agencies and greater coherence with country needs and strategies. In future, there should be greater budget support, more capacity-building and countries should be able to deal with only one institution instead of a plethora of institutions. While considerable progress had been achieved, much more needed to be accomplished before the United Nations system became a very diversified one.

10. **Mr. Roselaer** (International Labour Organization (ILO)) said that ILO was committed to improving the coordination of United Nations system activities and helping Member States develop plans at the global and field levels. ILO had joined in the United Nations Global Compact and ILO field teams were contributing to national development programmes through inter alia the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs). Promotion of employment and productivity for all working people was one of the keys to reducing poverty. It required expertise, better management of integration of sectoral policies and ensuring of multidisciplinary responses.

11. In regard to child labour, a large ILO programme was seeking to abolish the practice by helping countries to apply the child labour conventions.

12. **Mr. Robineau** (Economic Commission for Europe) said a regional approach was required for several reasons: to follow up on international commitments; to deal with transboundary issues, the environment and the preservation of resources; and to ensure that policies converge at the regional level to deal with epidemics like AIDS. Cooperation should also be established between regional commissions and organizations represented by regional offices. The regional level could also answer the need for intersectoral coordination because large-scale development policies could no longer be treated by the sectoral method traditionally used by most United Nations agencies.

13. There was no doubt about the importance of regional commissions in that regard. Not only had the Johannesburg Summit given importance to the regional approach, but many entities in the United Nations system had plans to strengthen their regional offices so that global policies could be adjusted at the regional levels. Moreover, some regional bodies, both United Nations and non-United Nations bodies involved in trade and economics, saw the regions as a place to minimize risk and maximize the benefits of globalization.

14. The regional commissions could contribute to coordination in several ways: they could translate goals into policy terms by carrying out economic analysis and research; they could ensure consistency of policies by taking up trans-sectoral themes; they could ensure that the policies were implemented by allocating technical assistance to support such policies and programmes. Lastly, they could ensure integrated follow-up by conducting global reviews. In order for follow-up to be effective, it was essential to have good statistics which could be used for comparative studies.

15. **Mr. Kariuki** (United Kingdom) said the Council should play a central role in following up and implementing the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social, environmental and related fields, and in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

16. The European Union considered that the Chief Executives Board should continue to provide coordinated guidance to the United Nations system, and it encouraged the Board to fully support the implementation of the operational reform agenda to enhance the coherence and effectiveness of the United Nations system at the country level. The Millennium Development Goals would be achieved at the country level and it was there that the concept of "One United Nations" was particularly important.

17. The European Union would like to learn specifically how the Chief Executives Board and the relevant United Nations system's executive committees would work together to oversee and coordinate further reform of the United Nations funds and programmes.

18. **Mr. Di Liscia** (United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)) said that economic growth was a key factor in development. Accordingly, there was a need to enhance the contribution of the United Nations system to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by establishing a voluntary mechanism — like a common agenda for

coordinated action — in order to facilitate a more rational division of work on economic development in the United Nations, promote further specialization around the core competencies of the organizations concerned and strengthen synergies.

19. **Mr. Bernardini** (Italy) said that coordination and integration were of particular relevance at the field level. They were also relevant in the context of the Secretary-General's report (A/59/2005), which hinted that the United Nations might consolidate some of its entities active on the operational side. This seemed to suggest that the United Nations might be moving towards a situation where coordination and integration would become key concepts.

20. It was generally recognized that the United Nations should be present at the field level, with one strong image built around the role of the Resident Coordinator. Although the present system had clear cases of conflict of interest between the roles of the Resident Coordinator and the Resident Representative of UNDP, the former needed to be the "real representative of the United Nations family". That was a key question today when improvement in the capacity of the United Nations system at the field level was under consideration.

21. **Ms. Taylor Roberts** (Jamaica) said the possibility of moving towards the integration approach was fully understandable in terms of the common system approach currently being promoted by the United Nations. However, each organization and entity had its own mandate and it might not be possible to integrate all the agencies within the system. Regarding UNDP being the main entity responsible for all activities in the field and the importance of its coordinating role, she pointed out that the regional commissions also had important roles to play.

22. Her delegation was encouraged by the report of the Chief Executives Board, which referred to the more focused approach developed by various agencies, as illustrated by the coordinated approach on poverty eradication, involving an alliance between the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), UNEP and the World Trade Organization (WTO) under the umbrella of the ILO's Global Employment Agenda.

23. As the Board had noted in its report, many challenges lay ahead. An effective system of communication between entities was required. Although each organization had its own mandate, overall communication was important to facilitate the sharing of knowledge, experience and best practices. Better coordination was also needed with stakeholders at the country level.

24. **Mr. Elbakly** (Observer for Egypt) asked about the coordination to be expected, in terms of the implementation of Millennium Development Goals, between the regional hubs being opened by UNDP and the work of the regional commissions.

25. **Mr. Civili** (Assistant Secretary-General, Department of Economic and Social Affairs), responding to the question raised by the representative of Italy, said that coordinated and integrated follow-up to international conferences had been one area where the Chief Executives Board for Coordination and the Council had been reinforcing each other over the past five years; in fact, in that period United Nations Secretariat reports had to a large extent been inter-agency products. The Chief Executives Board and the Council were of like mind when it came to translating the concept of integration into institutional terms and to agreeing that the strengthening of coordination at country level was a priority for the United Nations system as a whole. The implications of that approach were being actively discussed at inter-agency level in the United Nations Development Group and other forums. Much of the answer to the point raised by the representative of Jamaica on the matter of competition lay in the way the agencies of the United Nations system cooperated with each other and the way in which the Member States responded to repeated calls by the system for more stable, reliable and assured sources of funding.

26. **Mr. Graisse** (World Food Programme) said that the focus should be on the goal of helping poor and hungry people to achieve their development objectives, with the United Nations reform process then flowing from the plans as to how best to achieve that goal. Coherence, coordination and synergies were simply means towards the end of helping people, and the success or failure of United Nations system reforms should be judged against that standard. The strategic objectives of the World Food Programme in its last two four-year Strategic Plans had been based on what its programmes could contribute to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The World Food Programme was paying particular attention to opportunities for joint programming in areas where

food assistance was able to combine with other activities so as to increase the total impact of United Nations system and national programmes. The recent Millennium Project Report had acknowledged the contribution of food-based programmes towards achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, and some of the interventions it had identified as best able to advance that progress were, in fact, part of the World Food Programme's regular assistance to developing countries. United Nations agencies and programmes had transformed their goals and activities in response to the unifying purpose of the Millennium Declaration, which had brought the United Nations system together in a new spirit of collaboration and cooperation.

27. Policy support, advocacy, normative standard setting and monitoring progress were all important contributions which the United Nations could make to achieving the Goals, but as the Chief Executives Board report had stated, the international community must translate those policies into coherent programmes and operations that yielded concrete results. One example of that combination of policy and operational work was the Education for All initiative, which combined global advocacy and policy development led by UNESCO and a strong World Bank-led "fast track initiative" operational component; the World Food Programme had contributed to it through support for school feeding programmes to the tune of US$ 400-500 million per year. A second example was to be found in the fight against HIV/AIDS: the Chief Executives Board had endorsed an innovative approach to addressing the triple threat of HIV/AIDS, food security and governance in sub-Saharan Africa, which had translated into the establishment of the Regional Inter-agency Coordination and Support Office in Johannesburg. Achieving the goal of making poverty history depended to a large extent on reaching the poorest and most marginalized people with direct assistance.

28. **Mr. Mertens** (World Health Organization (WHO)) noting the inter-relationship between development goals, said that Millennium Development Goals 4, 5 and 6 were directly related to health, yet they could not be achieved solely by targeting the health issues or solely by WHO. Education resources and economic growth, among other factors, were also part of the solution. No single development organization could afford to work in isolation: powerful combinations were needed for the Millennium Development Goals to be achieved. At its recent session, the World Health Assembly had adopted three resolutions related to the Millennium Development Goals and to United Nations reform; all of them referred to the interrelationship of the goals.

29. In order to improve coordination among governing bodies of the United Nations system, all development actors should adopt an integrated and holistic approach involving agreement on integrated national development objectives, full country ownership and consensus on cooperation modalities. In the absence of that, the sector orientation of development programmes seemed to prevail. Governing bodies might meet at regular intervals to discuss development cooperation trends and engage in constructive dialogue on modalities for aid and development cooperation in different countries. The Economic and Social Council might be in a position to provide a platform for the dialogue, and in any event WHO would certainly welcome the establishment of a link between the Chief Executives Board and the United Nations Development Group.

30. **Mr. Wahba** (Director, Division for United Nations Affairs (UNDP)), noting that the Chief Executives Board report could have simply listed the achievements of every organization and agency, instead of looking at how the system itself operated, said that the purposes of coordination were to achieve increased efficiency; to tackle together problems that were essentially multi-element and could be solved only in a coordinated manner; and to exploit the unique value added advantage of diverse United Nations agencies working together, which was something no other development partner could match.

31. The way ahead lay in concentrating on the links between the three constituent elements of the report — the development nexus; conflict prevention and management; and democracy and human rights. Attention needed to be given to the way in which the operational agencies were going to work better with the policy-oriented agencies or regional commissions, and how both were going to work better with the normative-based agencies.

32. Turning to questions that had been raised, he said that there was the beginning of a link between the United Nations Development Group and the High-Level Committee on Programmes, with reciprocal

representation at meetings. The latter's discussion of the triple threat of HIV/AIDS, governance and hunger had led directly to a series of operational consequences in the former, especially in southern Africa. The Chief Executives Board had worked on determining coordination mechanisms among United Nations system agencies dealing with energy and water, and that had had consequences in terms of joint work at field level. Strategic decisions on crime prevention and drug trafficking taken within the Chief Executives Board had had an effect in the review of United Nations Development Assistance Framework Common Country Assessment guidelines.

33. As for UNDP's coordinating role and alleged conflicts of interest between the Resident Coordinator and the Resident Representative, UNDP knew of none and would welcome any information the representative of Italy might have, so that it might be in a position to take corrective action if that proved to be necessary. UNDP played a coordinating role among field-based agencies in the preparation of instruments, but the actual mandate of coordination lay with the national authorities of Member States, which were using whatever means were available within the United Nations system at field level to coordinate a United Nations response to their national strategies.

34. As for the link between regional hubs and regional commissions, he said that the regional presences of different agencies served different purposes. Regional commissions had a very strong coordination mandate at regional and subregional levels with regard to policy development and strategic approaches, while UNDP regional hubs brought together the experience derived from various country offices in the region and distilled them into general practical development policy work.

35. **Ms. Betson** (Ireland) requested more details concerning the link between the Resident Representative and the Resident Coordinator. As for the proposed greater cohesion between governing boards, she said that it was a very good idea, in principle, but experience had shown that joint meetings were not always very effective in practice.

36. **Mr. Civili** (Assistant Secretary-General, Department of Economic and Social Affairs), responding to the representative of the United Kingdom, said that the Chief Executives Board was very much involved in the discussion concerning UNDP Country Directors. Turning to the comments made by the representative of Ireland, he agreed that regular governing body meetings were a good idea in principle, but very difficult to organize in practice. The Council should not think in terms of one meeting bringing together the Council and the Bureaux of all the governing bodies of the system; indeed, an earlier experiment to hold meetings between the Council and the entire Chief Executives Board had failed. That did not mean, however, that the idea should not be pursued. Much would depend on how the Council decided to organize its responsibilities vis-à-vis monitoring implementation of the development agenda. Drawing up an agenda spread over several years with themes that would be addressed at successive sessions was, in his view, the best way forward, as it would allow the Council to interact on a particular theme with the relevant agencies and Bureaux of the governing bodies. Such interaction would need to be part of Council discussions on how it could best execute its responsibilities vis-à-vis monitoring implementation of the development agenda.

37. **Mr. Wahba** (Director, Division for United Nations Affairs (UNDP)), responding to comments concerning the link between the United Nations Resident Coordinator and the UNDP Country Director, said that there were several instances, mainly in countries with a Special Representative of the Secretary-General and therefore a peacekeeping mission, where the United Nations Resident Coordinator also served as the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for development and humanitarian issues. In such cases, and in some cases where efficient delivery of the coordination mandate would leave little room for other work, UNDP had appointed a Country Director to take care of the day-to-day management of the UNDP programme. UNDP was looking to expand the practice beyond countries with a peacekeeping mission to other countries with a heavy coordination mandate. In cases where a UNDP Country Director had been appointed, the Resident Coordinator continued to be the UNDP Resident Representative and therefore had UNDP programme resources at his or her disposal. Indeed, UNDP firmly believed that the coordination mandate could not be discharged without access to multisectoral programme resources, such as those delivered by UNDP.

38. **Mr. Khan** (Director, Office of ECOSOC Support and Coordination) said that the discussion h. ointed to a sense of reciprocal understanding of ow the United Nations system was moving forward in an effort to align itself into a single strategic direction and would, in his view, help to align the system in such a way as to harmonize the broader political objectives of the Organization, the security concerns of Member States and the development- and poverty-related concerns of the people of the world.

39. While the challenge facing the United Nations was considerable, 2005 presented a historic opportunity to build on the progress that had been made in the past five years. The Millennium Development Goals, though still the main focus, encompassed many cross-cutting themes such as human rights, the gender dimension, employment and governance. That broader development agenda, linked up with the broader political, security and human rights agendas, provided a framework for moving forward. The role of dialogue between the Council and the Chief Executives Board was a major challenge which needed to be thought of in specific terms such as accountability, of the system, Member States and the international community as a whole. If all those strands could be brought together, the Council and General Assembly — the prime intergovernmental bodies — would be able to put together key mechanisms built on accountability in order to achieve the major strategic shift that was required to achieve the goals that would be set in September.

40. **Mr. Robineau** (Economic Commission for Europe), responding to the questions raised by the representatives of Egypt and Jamaica concerning the relationship between UNDP and the regional commissions, said that as a general rule there was no problem, provided the history, proven assets and inherent nature of each regional commission were recognized. The Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), for example, focused on normative work and policy analysis and its technical assistance was aimed at ensuring that its norms were effectively implemented in less advanced transitional economies. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), meanwhile, had a considerable capacity for economic analysis and cooperated closely with the UNDP regional office. Another difference was that UNDP was a development programme, while ECE was a subsidiary body of the Council, meaning that it had a more top-down approach to its work and could use its convening power to organize follow-up conferences, which enjoyed high attendance and were organized in close cooperation with UNDP. ECE also had well-established expertise and networks in transboundary fields such as transport, management of international waters, energy and trade, in which areas it built capacity with UNDP support. Combining the complementarities in terms of the status, history and field of expertise of each commission could lead to a division of labour or joint cooperation when operating in the same fields. ECE had no problem with that, provided such complementarities were mutually understood and respected. The basic rule in that regard was that if any initiative by UNDP or one of the regional commissions entered the field of the other, it would be necessary to discuss how the two would work together or perhaps which body would take responsibility for the initiative.

41. **Mr. Raubenheimer** (South Africa) said that the CEB report painted a very clear picture of the issue and challenges of coordination in a very complex system. Having spent some time in the capital of his own country, he was very aware of the need to ensure that countries spoke with one voice in the different parts of the United Nations system. In that regard, Member States needed to address the disjunct that sometimes existed, for example, between statements made in the Council chamber and statements made during negotiations.

42. **Mr. Civili** (Assistant Secretary-General, Department of Economic and Social Affairs) said that there was a clear sense that, for the United Nations system to have a future, it could not simply rally around the same principles and goals, but needed to show that multilateralism did deliver. The questions raised during the discussion seemed to suggest that everyone was on the same wavelength. The report, while far from perfect, was a first in that it did not simply report on what had been done in the previous year, but conducted a self-assessment and made a number of specific commitments concerning the way forward. As Secretary of the Chief Executives Board, he was seeking to ensure that those commitments were seen not as the end of the exercise, but rather as a basis for ongoing assessment. He suggested that Council members should adopt the same approach during all segments and, in particular, when considering how to reform and structure their work in order to enable the

Council to be the central agent for monitoring implementation of the MDGs. Lastly, he urged them to continually question the Chief Executives Board on how it was meeting the commitments contained in the report.

43. **The President** said that the debate had been very important and would shed new light on the work of the Council and of the United Nations system as a whole.

The meeting rose at 5.45 p.m.